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2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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June 20, 2003

VIA FACSIMILE

The Honorable Ralph F. Boyd, Jr.
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Boyd:

I write you to request a formal pattern and practice (42 U.S.C.A. 14141) investigation of police practices surrounding the death of Terrance Shurn of Benton Harbor, MI, who was killed during a high-speed chase with local township police. As you know, many community leaders consider the death of Mr. Shurn the spark that set off several days of civil unrest which resulted in major property damage to the community and a massive police presence to restore order.

Over the past several years, I have made repeated visits to the City of Benton Harbor to consult with members of the community about issues ranging from economic development to police accountability. While I was saddened by the events of this week, conditions in the community are so desperate that one could not be completely surprised at the turn of events. Benton Harbor presents a classic case of multi-jurisdictional policing, similar to Dade County, FL, that can result the application of inappropriate practices within or against communities of color by a largely white police force, leading to serious mistrust and volatility.

Given the small size of the community and the recent history of police related fatalities, I am concerned about the appearance of a pattern of conduct with regard to the use of force by local law enforcement agencies within the Benton Harbor community. While I applaud the work

The Honorable Ralph F. Boyd, Jr.

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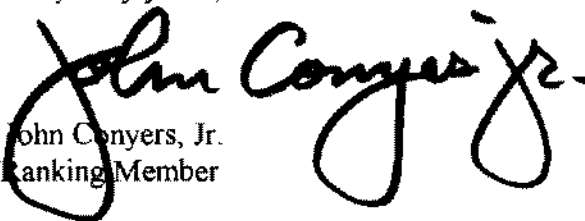
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the signal that the Department is committed to using its resources to help rebuild this shattered community.

In addition, I am also concerned about the potential misuse of Housing and Urban Development and other federal funds nominally being directed to Benton Harbor and its residents. The *Michigan Citizen* has detailed a systemic misuse and lack of accountability of federal funds, in potential violation of federal civil rights law, in a series of articles and editorials over the course of the last decade. I believe this warrants a comprehensive federal investigation as well.

Please contact me or my Judiciary Committee Counsel Keenan Keller at (202) 225-6906 so that we can coordinate a response to these community concerns. Given the incendiary nature of this situation, I trust that this matter will be of the highest priority.

Very truly yours,



John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member

cc: Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, Judiciary Committee

Honorable Will Moschella
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Legislative Affairs